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A PROJECT IN ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL CITIZENSHIP

W. D. ARMENTROUT
Colorado State Teachers College

Very often in training for citizenship we concentrate our attention too largely upon the citizenship that children are to enjoy and exercise in the future, and neglect the citizenship that they are enjoying and experiencing now. Meeting each day's needs of child life is the best preparation for meeting the needs of adult life. John Dewey says:

We are continually uneasy about the things we adults know and are afraid the child will never learn them unless they are drilled into him by instruction before he has any intellectual use for them. If we could really believe that attending to the needs of present growth would keep the child and teacher alike busy and would also provide the best possible guarantee of the learning needed in the future, transformation of educational ideals might soon be accomplished, and other desirable changes would largely take care of themselves.¹

Whatever type of citizen we are trying to foster in the growing child, the logical procedure is to utilize the circumstances in which he is now naturally placed and the activities which are adapted to his interests and needs. Training in elementary-school citizenship must be in social activities, each one a child's problem in which the factors and conditions are familiarly known to him and its solution some real concern to him.

Training in citizenship must begin at least with the beginning of the child's school life. Children even at the moment of entering the first grade of the elementary school are citizens with important social relations, interests, and problems. But consciousness of citizenship is necessarily a matter of slow growth. The child must come gradually to understand his social relations and responsibilities. He must gradually realize the common interests which exist between himself and others with whom he comes in contact.

¹ John Dewey, *Schools of Tomorrow*, p. 5. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.

In the everyday life of the school, innumerable occasions arise for pupils to acquire information concerning government and their duties and responsibilities toward government. Intelligent citizenship demands knowledge, ideals, motives, and habits. Knowledge about government is not the only type of intelligence a citizen should have. No amount of knowledge will make a desirable citizen unless he is able to use it and use it with judgment. For the most part, we have heretofore been content with trying to increase the child's intelligence in social and civic matters by giving him information which does not reach his understanding or interest because it is too remote and relates to a world which concerns only grown-ups. The attempt to make children learn many of the things which adults have found useful is very often found fruitless because children have not the basis of experience to interpret this knowledge. They quickly forget because they never really knew. Ability to use knowledge comes from practice in using it. As we learn to do by doing, just so we learn to be by being. Since intelligent citizenship also depends upon proper ideals, motives, and habits, the development of these should be the principal aim in the elementary school. Too much should not be expected of children in the grades in the realization of civic intelligence, but here is the starting-point for the formation of the ideals and habits which we desire the adult citizen to have.

Real training in citizenship requires practice in meeting real present problems. Just to the extent that the problems or means are artificial are the activities lacking in educational value for the growing citizen. What we need is to inject democratic principles and methods into school life. With this purpose in mind an attempt has been made to organize student government in the elementary training school of the Colorado State Teachers College.

The form of any organization depends upon the purpose in view, the material available, and the interests of the individuals involved. The present plan of student government was not formally organized until the pupils were conscious of the problems and appreciated the need of their solution. The stimulus came largely from within the group rather than from without. When it was reasonably certain that the pupils would have a pride in the success of the experiment,

a desire to be helpful to each other, and a sense of group responsibility, the formal organization was undertaken.

In the attempt to work out a form of organization, the pupils were confronted with many problems. The project was first launched at the close of an assembly. The first problem was a very important one: Who would take charge of the meeting? One boy suggested that they have a manager, another suggested a director, and a girl suggested a president. Before the president was elected, the duties of the office were freely discussed under the guidance of a training-teacher, so that each pupil had a rather clear idea of the type of boy or girl who should be elected president. It was soon evident to all that someone should keep a record of what was happening, and a secretary was elected. After the other necessary officers were chosen, the big problem arose as to who would "run" the government. This led to much discussion and little accomplishment.

It was soon evident that random discussion and suggestions of the entire group would achieve little. These discussions, however, set forth the various problems that student government would meet. An interesting problem was at this point presented by one of the pupils who wanted to know how they could prevent boys from taking wheels that did not belong to them. Someone suggested a policeman. They soon discovered that there would be too many things for one person to look after, and this finally led to the idea of having a group of policemen. This further developed into the idea of having a committee appointed to look after the various problems of student government. It was finally agreed that a committee should be appointed to work out a plan for their student government. This committee later became known as the Constitution Committee.

The Junior Council consists of all the pupils in the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. The lower grades are each represented by two members of their group. The work of the council is done by five committees, Clean-up Committee, Order Committee, Campus Committee, Basement Committee, and Constitution Committee. The names of these committees indicate their respective functions. Each committee has an adviser who is a training-

teacher. All the by-laws were suggested and written by the pupils themselves, and the committees see to it that these by-laws are not violated. The duties of the committees are fully stated in the by-laws.

The Order Committee is perhaps the most important committee and has many more duties than any other. No doubt, the pupils will soon realize the need of dividing the duties and delegating some of them to other committees or new ones. One of the important functions of this committee is to look after the "traffic," the passing of lines between classes. The value of the service rendered in this connection is described in an editorial which appeared in a recent issue of *Training School Life*, a newspaper published by the English classes of the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades.

TRAFFIC

With so large an enrollment of student teachers it is very hard to get up and down stairs to our classes.

Last winter we had traffic managers to keep everybody on the proper side going up or down stairs.

To the new student teachers and children who do not know the rules we are giving a chance to learn them.

1. Going down into the basement or up the stairs to the ground floor, keep to the banisters so that other students can go past.

2. From the ground floor up stairs, keep to the wall so that pupils may go down while you go up.

Of course, you all like to stop and talk to your friends, but this must not be done on the stairs because there are other students who do not want to be stopped. You have full ten minutes to get to your classes, but the bell that dismisses one of our classes is the beginning of another.

We need order on the stairs; everybody needs order. Help us to keep it so that we may not be late for our classes.

Regular meetings of the entire council are held once a month and at this time the various committees make their reports. The president may call a special meeting at any time considered necessary.

The most serious happening for any individual is to be suspended from the council. At a recent track meet three of the boys who were the best athletes in the school were forbidden to represent the school in the meet because they had been suspended from the council for certain offenses.

It is not to be expected that a satisfactory form of organization will be hit upon the first year. If intelligent adults, experienced in politics, were unable to devise a federation of American states without transition from the Articles of Confederation to a new constitution and without frequent modification of the commonly accepted meaning of that constitution through court decisions, civil war, and amendments, it does not seem reasonable to expect children to make a perfect success of any plan of organization which they devise to meet what they consider their needs. It is to be expected that the organization of the Junior Council will undergo frequent changes as new conditions arise and as the understanding of the children increases through experience and study. The significant fact is that this organization will progress toward the desired goal.

In the process of organizing student government, the teachers have great responsibility in making clear the consequences of the organization and the need of officers who do their work efficiently. Any tendency to think that the council will run itself without effort on the part of its members must be removed. Pupils must come to an understanding of what is essential in the performance of their duties as members or officers of the council and its committees.

CONSTITUTION OF THE JUNIOR COUNCIL

ARTICLE I

The name of this organization shall be the Junior Council of the Elementary Training School.

ARTICLE II

The object of the organization is to promote school spirit and to attain the highest standards of efficiency in the school.

ARTICLE III

SECTION 1. All pupils of the Junior High School, the fifth grade, and two representatives from each of the lower grades of the Training School shall be members of this organization.

SEC. 2. Any member of the organization who does not live up to its standards may be suspended upon advice of faculty advisers.

SEC. 3. Any member so suspended may be admitted to full membership when proving himself worthy.

ARTICLE IV

The officers of the organization shall be president, vice-president, and secretary, and two sergeants-at-arms. They shall be elected at the beginning of each semester.

ARTICLE V

Duties.—SECTION 1. The president shall preside at all meetings of the organization. He shall have power to appoint the members of committees and shall fill all vacancies in the committees. He shall be an ex officio member of all committees.

SEC. 2. The vice-president shall act in the absence of the president or at the request of the president.

SEC. 3. The secretary shall keep the minutes of the meetings of the organization.

SEC. 4. The sergeants-at-arms shall keep order in the meetings and see that no unnecessary interruptions occur.

ARTICLE VI

Meetings.—SECTION 1. Regular meetings of the organization shall take place on the last Friday of the month at the chapel hour.

SEC. 2. Special meetings may be called by the president at any time considered necessary.

SEC. 3. The order of meetings shall be as follows: Call to order, the minutes of the last meeting read, reports of committees, unfinished business, new business.

ARTICLE VII

Committees.—SECTION 1. There shall be the following committees in the organization: Order, Basement, Clean-up, Campus, Constitution.

SEC. 2. The committees shall decide upon their own time and place of meeting, but such meetings shall take place at least once a month.

SEC. 3. If any member of a committee does not fulfill his part in the work, the president shall have power to appoint a new member to take his place.

ARTICLE VIII

There shall be a reporter chosen from the organization who shall report after each meeting to the lower grades on matters of any importance to these grades.

ARTICLE IX

It shall be the duty of the Order Committee and the Board of Advisers, acting as one body, to decide all matters concerning misconduct. The Order Committee shall derive its power from the Director of the Training School.

BY-LAWS

- I. Cleanliness shall be observed in the Training School by the following:
 1. Paper shall be kept off the floor in all parts of the building.
 2. Chalk shall be kept off the floor.
 3. The blackboard shall not be used except when it is necessary.
 4. The tops of our desks shall be cleared when we are not using them.
 5. The inside of our desks shall be in order.
 6. Our locker doors shall be closed.
 7. Everything that is left in the basement shall be kept in the lockers.
 8. There shall be no marking on any of the walls.
- II.
 1. Children passing to and from classes and chapel shall do so as quietly as possible and shall keep to the right.
 2. While waiting for classes to be dismissed pupils shall stand to the right of classroom door and keep passage in front of the door clear.
 3. Children shall not enter classroom while classes are reciting or until classes are dismissed.
- III.
 1. In going up and down all flights of stairs in the Training School children will keep to the right and go single file.
- IV.
 1. Children shall be orderly in room when the teacher is not there.
 2. It will be in no way considered tattling for pupils to make reports to the teacher concerning disorder.
 3. If teachers report to the Order Committee that a child has been dismissed from classes, or has been disorderly on the campus or on the way to or from school, he shall be suspended from the council.
 4. A pupil suspended from the council can be reinstated only upon the suggestion of the advisers and a two-thirds vote of the entire council.
 5. A pupil may be suspended from the council for one very serious offense against the good order or good name of the school.
 6. The seriousness of offenses shall be determined by a joint meeting of the Order Committee and the advisers.
- V.
 1. The president shall appoint a traffic manager, who, with the help of five assistants, will regulate the passing of pupils up and down the stairs.
 2. These traffic assistants shall be appointed each week by the traffic manager who will post on the bulletin board every Friday the names of those on duty for the coming week.
 3. The assistants shall be on duty from 8:50 to 9:00 A.M. and from 1:00 to 1:30 P.M. daily.
 4. These five assistants shall be stationed one on each landing and two in the basement.

- VI. 1. Children after being seated in chapel shall be quiet and orderly until the exercises commence.
2. During the exercises children shall be politely attentive.
- VII. 1. There shall be no gum chewing or throwing of any articles such as shot, paper wads, chalk, tin foil, or similar articles in the classrooms.
2. There shall be no sliding down any banisters in the Training School building.
- VIII. Politeness shall be cultivated by children in the classroom both in action and conversation.
- IX. Pencils shall be sharpened only between classes.
- X. 1. Children must stay on the walks both afoot and on wheels.
2. All children must leave the buildings and campus by four o'clock or immediately after their last class unless special permission is obtained or in case of a school function held in the Training School building.
3. No rubbish shall be thrown on the campus.
4. No cars are to be parked within the campus.
5. There shall be no snowballing or throwing of other missiles.
6. There shall be no breaking of shrubbery.
7. There shall be no fighting on the campus.
8. All wheels are to be placed in racks.
9. All children are to remain away from wheels which do not belong to them, and no wheel is to be removed from the rack without permission of the owner.
- XI. 1. Good order must be kept in the basement. The passageways must not be used as playing places.
2. The time spent in the basement between classes must not be over five to eight minutes.
3. Before the opening of school children must be in the library, the playroom, the story-telling room (at noon), or out of doors.
4. There must be no loafing in the basement.